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ETHNOGENIC IDENTIFICATION, A SURVEY OF THE PICTORIAL CONTENT OF SELECTED CURRENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS.

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THIS IS A FOLLOWUP OF A STUDY CONDUCTED IN 1960 OF SELECTED TEXTBOOK PUBLISHERS TO ASCERTAIN IF THERE HAS BEEN A CHANGE IN THEIR EDITORIAL, ARTISTIC, AND PUBLISHING VIEWS AND PRACTICES REGARDING THE USE OF MULTIRACIAL PICTURES IN ELEMENTARY TEXTBOOKS. IT IS ALSO AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT VIEWS AND PRACTICES OF OTHER MAJOR TEXTBOOK PUBLISHERS REGARDING THE USE OF VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS (ESPECIALLY MINORITIES) IN BOOKS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN. TWENTY-SIX FIRMS WERE SENT QUESTIONNAIRES, AND IT WAS FOUND THAT HALF OF THEM WERE ATTEMPTING TO PORTRAY "A TRUE PICTURE OF LIFE IN AMERICA." THIS FINDING SHOWED SOME CHANGE SINCE THE ORIGINAL SURVEY. TEN FIRMS WOULD NOT RESPOND, INCLUDING THREE FROM THE ORIGINAL SURVEY. THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTIRACIAL MATERIAL TO BOTH WHITES AND MINORITY GROUPS IS STRESSED. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE "QUARTERLY REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG NEGROES," VOLUME 35, NUMBER 3, JULY 1967. (AF)

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THE QUARTERLY REVIEW OF
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Ethnogenic Identification: A Survey of The Pictorial Content of Selected Current Elementary School Textbooks

By Launey F. Roberts, Jr.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, it is a follow-up of a study conducted six years ago of selected textbook publishers for the purpose of ascertaining if there has been a distinctive degree of change in the editorial, artistic and overall publishing views and practices regarding the use of multi-racial pictures in elementary textbooks.

Secondly, this study will also assess the current editorial and publishing views and practices of additional major textbook publishers regarding the use of various ethnic groups and especially minorities in story content and illustrative materials in books for elementary school children.

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From the time a child begins to recognize and identify pictures and letters in books either at home, at school, or in a library, he is in constant touch with one of the basic educational tools which will shape and affect his learning capacity, personality, and emotional development from nursery school through college. The necessity of providing and exposing children to reading material which considers, among other things, their interest, sex, and abilities is important, but coupled with these factors are other considerations which are essential, e.g., being able to identify with characters and events in books and being exposed to a variety of materials that are free of racial and ethnic bias, omissions, inaccuracies and inequities that have long distorted the textbook to which American children have been subjected.

Although there are recent indications that some textbook publishers have sought to upgrade and improve the printed materials in their textbooks, until recently, comparatively, very little has been done with regards to the pictorial content of these books.

For more than a century there has been an urgent and critical need for textbooks to more completely and accurately reflect and portray, in printed text and in pictures, the multi-racial and multi-cultural composition of American life.

With the foregoing in mind, it is readily understandable why careful consideration needs to be given to the content of all books that children read. In this connection, during the summer of 1960, this writer sought to determine to what extent many of the major textbook publishers provided textbooks which portrayed in text and pictures, the multi-racial and multi-cultural "melting pot" that is America by conducting a study.

In July 1960, a letter of inquiry was sent

to seventeen of the nation's leading textbook publishers throughout the country seeking to ferret out their publishing policies and practices in this regard. Of the seventeen polled, eleven or 65 percent sent replies. Their answers ran the gamut of possibilities and probabilities. Four or 24 percent indicated that pictures were used solely as a supplement to the text and had little significance otherwise. One or 6 percent indicated that care was taken not to show individuals from minority groups in menial or subservient roles. Four or 24 percent evaded sending a direct answer to the question and avoided submitting a clear and concise answer. Two or 12 percent claimed to have discontinued publishing textbooks. The remaining six or 35 percent, which included two firms from the Deep South and one each from the Mid and Far West, failed to respond to the inquiry. It was significantly revealing to find, in 1960, that not one of the eleven firms who answered the inquiry included, in their publications, pictures of Negroes or Puerto Ricans with whites even when it might have been germane to the printed text. Their answers were generally evasive and totally non-commital. Since 1960, when the initial study began, not only in America, but throughout the entire world, there has been an increased awareness and a definite degree of change with regard to the importance of and the need for continued inter-racial understanding, tolerance, and respect. This change has been reflected in America in almost every quarter, and most notably in the area of public accommodations and, to a lesser degree, in the areas of school desegregation and equal job opportunities.

This writer, not content with the findings of his initial study, sought to determine if, after six years, these changes and the divergency they suggest were to any extent being reflected in our school's textbooks.

METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was sent in September, 1966, to 26 of the nation's major textbook publishers to obtain a wider range and perspective than before. The size, type, and location of these firms were varied, i.e., very large firms with five to ten branches throughout the world to small firms with their output limited to primarily one section of the country. Their home offices were located in all sections of the country.

The questions and the five statements which the firms were asked to check were as follows:

Does your firm include in its textbooks, pictures which show students, especially Negroes and Puerto Ricans along with their white counterparts, together at play, in classrooms, in social settings and/or in history textbooks, pictures of historical significance? (e.g., Crispus Attucks, the first American casualty, a Negro and a runaway slave, who was killed at the Boston Massacre in 1770).

PLEASE CHECK ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

( )1. We feel that multi-racial pictures are included in our textbooks mainly as a supplement to the written text and we use them to add color and to stimulate interest. These are our primary reasons for including them.

( )2. We find it economically unfeasible to produce two series of books, one with racially integrated pictures and one without, or rather, one series for consumption in the North and one for the South. Consequently, we produce textbooks

that can be marketed throughout the country.

( )3. We have no definite policy regarding your inquiry.

( )4. We are currently revising our publications and plan to include pictures of the type you refer to in the near future.

( )5. We have been publishing the type textbook you refer to for sometime and are enclosing a brochure of these publications for your study.

FINDINGS

Of the 26 firms canvassed 16 or 62 percent responded. Many of them also sent book samples, letters, and other material to further clarify their position relative to this study. Considering the percentage of replies, along with other corroborating material sent by these firms, the findings are significant.

Of the five statements on the questionnaire, only 1 or 4 percent of the respondents checked the first statement, which indicated that the primary reasons for using multi-racial pictures in these textbooks were to add color and to stimulate interest. This respondent, *Century Schoolbook Press* also checked the fifth statement which indicated that their firm had been publishing material which portrayed multi-racial pictures for sometime. Two or 8 percent indicated, by checking the second statement that it was economically unsound and unfeasible to produce two series of books, one with racially integrated pictures and one without, or rather, one for consumption in the North and one for the South. One of these respondents, Benziger Brothers' minority balanced textbook *Land of The Free* although not geared primarily to the elementary level is, according to *Time Magazine*,[1] "kicking up a storm". *Time* indicates that *Land of The Free*, although being quite controversial at first, has been approved, with minor revisions, for use in all California public schools and in Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri. The other respondent, Silver-Burdett checked both the second and fifth statement and added the words "intellectually" and "morally" to "economically unfeasible" in statement number two in order to further strengthen and emphasize their position.

They also sent copies of their *Call Them Heroes* series and their primary level social studies textbooks, *Families and Their Needs* and *Communities and Their Needs*. *Families and Their Needs* portrays the three areas of man's basic needs and concerns—food, clothing, and shelter. These areas are approached in a multi-cultural and internationally comparative manner. The type shelter that is common to races and cultures of many countries is shown in vivid color and in black and white pictures. Children can readily identify with and understand the commonness of man's need for shelter and how he lives, satisfies and achieve as a family unit from continent to continent, country to country and city to city. Similar treatment is given to the sections devoted to clothing and food. In addition to the foregoing, the book is contemporary and up-to-date in is concept and design.

Communities and Their Needs, the companion book to *Families and Their Needs* also employs a similar approach to social studies instruction in the primary grades. Although there are few instances of racially integrated pictures of American children or adults shown in either of the above mentioned textbooks, there are numerous pic-

[1]Time Magazine, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 8, August 19, 1966, p. 53.

tures of individuals from many lands showing how they live, work, and play in a world community. In these books, however, children from ethnic backgrounds can see children and adults of other races and cultures portrayed in a sympathetic, favorable, and equitable manner. The *Call Them Heroes* series features brief real-life stories of individuals from varied races, cultures, religious beliefs and vocations, who live and work in New York City. The series is geared to either the upper elementary or the junior high level. The cover pictures and the content of these books are in vivid color and black and white. Not one of the sixteen respondents checked statement (3) which stated "We have no definite policy regarding your inquiry". This fact was meaningful, in that, of the sixteen publishers who responded out of the twenty-six polled, neither chose the "easy way out" nor alluded to subterfuge or rationalization by checking this statement.

Only one or four percent of the respondents, Creative Educational Society, Inc. checked the fourth statement which states, "we are currently revising our publications and plan to include pictures of the type you refer to in our textbooks in the near future". Regarding the last statement, thirteen or 50 percent of the publishers polled indicated that they had been publishing for sometime, textbooks and related material which portrayed a true picture of America's pluralistic society. Holt, Rinehart and Winston sent samples of their *Urban Social Studies Series* which portrays in words and pictures real-life situations that are practical and familiar and are the type with which children from urban multi-cultural and multi-racial backgrounds could easily identify. The contents in the level I book *William, Andy and Ramon* also exhibits a rather different approach to the portrayal of urban home and community living. The accompanying teachers guides are carefully outlined and annotated. *Swings* and *Slides* are the first and second of six paperback readers in the Chandler Publishing Company's reading program series. These readers include pictures of children of several ethnic backgrounds together in groups and individually at play, in an environment that could be located either in an urban, suburban or rural community. Their pictures are in natural black and white and the text is comparable to that of a good reading readiness program. These children, their surroundings, their clothing and the instruments with which they are playing are the kind that are familiar and which children from other than white, middle-class, advantaged environs can easily identify and relate. It is also significant that this publisher devised and prepared this series for the primary level where it is most effective and necessary. Follet's *The City Schools Reading Program* represents a pioneering break-through, initially in the Detroit Public Schools which provides childref from varied ethnic groups with a pictorial setting in which they can readily identify and from which they can more thoroughly and effectively learn. This program has been highly praised for its significant impact and overall effectiveness in helping the urban-centered culturally disadvantaged child to have numerous successful school experiences. This program is presently geared to the primary elementary level.

Scott-Foreman's approach to this problem takes into account a reading program which will be of value to all children, i.e., one that must be comprehensive with content that will reflect the multi-ethnic composition of today's communities. A sample of its reading series for grades four, five, and six includes pictures and drawings of

Negroes, Chinese-Americans, and Puerto Ricans and indicates the accomplishments and contributions of other ethnic groups to American life and culture such as that of a Russian-Jewish immigrant family, that came to America to escape tyranny and that of an American Sioux Indian, who sought a formal education in order to help his people.

Inclusions such as these mentioned above strengthen this series and make it of immense value not only to children from ethnic backgrounds, but also to their white counterparts. This approach is also significant, in that, it is quite different from the position the publisher took six years ago, when his answer bordered on evasion and avoidance rather than answering objectively and honestly.

In addition to checking the fourth statement, and in some cases sending samples of these books, many of the thirteen respondents sent copies of their firms' policies which were presented at a recent sub-committee hearing of the *U. S. House of Representatives' Education and Labor Committee.* The hearing dealt with the *"Treatment of Minorities in Textbooks,"* and was being conducted about the time this questionnaire was being circulated. Silver-Burdett's representative at this hearing, President Craig T. Senft, sent a copy of a New Jersey Newspapers' assessment of his presentment which stated that "Silver-Burdett, three years ago had set out to reamine the treatment of minorities in its textbooks and attempted to improve their textbooks. They made, moreover, an interesting decision to publish one version and one version only of their texts to be sold, hopefully, in every part of the nation. Many publishing houses, Senft revealed, could not afford to do this so they publish two, sometimes, three texts geared to different parts of the country. A fully integrated text, they said, simply would not sell in the Deep South".[2] Houghton-Mifflin's Vice President G. M. Fenollosa stated, at the same hearing, "The Educational Division of Houghton-Mifflin Company will release for publication only one edition of its elementary, secondary school and college publications; that edition will give representation to all groups, including minorities as well as the majority that make up American society, as we know it today."[3] This new approach to the problem represents a complete reversal from the stance Houghton-Mifflin assumed in 1960, when their answers were vague and evasive.

McGraw-Hill's Senior Vice President, Robert W. Locke, in his statement at the hearing, points out his firm's position regarding an assortment of educational material from textbooks and filmstrips to teacher-training material and periodic educational magazines which had made and were continuing to make progress toward making these materials reflect the multiracial composition of America. In his concluding remarks, he stated "if our present efforts to expand educational opportunity are successful, they will in turn, create greater demands. As children and older students improve their basic skills and capacity to learn and grow in their aspirations, they will want and need even more education. We should not hold back these aspirations with either ineffectual or insufficient books, films, or any other kind of instructional materials. And, we have only scratched the surface in pre-school programs, education for the handicapped, and continuing education. There is much

[2]Ridgewood Herald-News, September 1, 1966, p. 1.

[3]Letter from G. M. Fenollosa, Vice President and Director, Houghton-Mifflin Co., September 19, 1966.

more to be done, and it will require more money as well as the intellectual efforts of teachers, authors, and publishers. To conclude, and returning to the question of how minority groups are represented in textbooks, films, and other material, I believe that McGraw-Hill has made good progress, but we must and will do more".[4]

In 1960, McGraw-Hill indicated that they had no formal policy regarding the use of pictures of Negroes or other nonwhites in their publications. The foregoing statement shows a positive change from their earlier position.

SUMMARY

That thirteen or 50 percent of the 26 polled were attempting to show and portray a true picture of life in America in their printed text and in their illustrations was significant and positively a sign of change. Although it cannot be said with absolute accuracy which factors are responsible and are continuing to evoke this sorely needed and long awaited change, the harm that the denial and the indifference of the past have inflicted upon millions of Americans of ethnic backgrounds can never be totally undone. The only hope is that these signs, which indicate an increased awareness, "a pricking of the conscience", and a real chance for exposing the children of the many races and cultures, that comprise America, to a realistic and truthful appraisal of their country, will be meaningful, lasting, and enduring. Of equal importance is the number of publishers who failed to respond to the questionnaire. Of the 26 polled, ten or 38 percent failed to reply. Of the eleven firms who responded to the first inquiry in 1960, six were polled during this survey. Of this six polled in 1960, only three responded. The responses of these three firms were among the thirteen who indicated a change in their publishing and editorial practices since 1960. Although this represents only a small percentage of the firms polled in the 1960 survey, this amount is however, significant. Surprisingly though, not only did the firms from the Deep South fail to respond to the second survey, two firms from the Northeast did likewise. Followup letters brought only one reply.

Although these books are in their infancy, a major weakness is, that in only one of them is there the type and kind of situations and and scenes to which the rural or semi-rural Negro, Mexican-American or Puerto Rican child can readily identify. And, notwithstanding the latest report of the U.S. Census Bureau's Report of Population characteristics,[5] which show that the Negro population continues to shift to the large cities, there still remains a substantial number of Negroes in rural and semi-rural areas whose self-image and self-esteem would be substantially enhanced from exposure to textbooks and material of the kind in question. Another major weakness, noted in a recent edition of *Time Magazine* is that "these books tend to be too tidy and that the illustrations often show exactly three children together, one Negro, one white and one Puerto Rican".[6]

For centuries, the downtrodden, the oppressed and the neglected, of the many ethnic groups that make up America, have sought to become a vital and vigorous part of this great Nation. The American Negro, who comprises the greater part of this ethnic population, needs help in developing a more positive sense of himself and of

[4]Letter from Robert W. Locke, Senior Vice President, McGraw-Hill Co., September 23, 1966.

[5]U. S. Department of Commerce, Population Characteristics, Negro *Population:* March, 1966, Series p-20, No. 157, December 16, 1966, p. 53.

[6]*Time Magazine*, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 8, August 19, 1966, p. 53.

his place in America and in the world. The hypothesis which is germane in this regard is that the Negro child from earliest school entry through graduation from high school needs many opportunities to see himself and his racial group in a realistically positive light. He needs to understand what color and race mean; he needs to learn about those of his race, and other disadvantaged groups, who have succeeded; and he needs to clarify his understanding of his own group history and the current group situation.

In addition, not only will the inclusion of pictures of a multi-ethnic nature be enhancing and of value to Negroes and other minority groups, it will also be of profound importance to their white counterparts.

James Baldwin points this up succinctly when he states, "if one managed to change the curriculum in all the schools so that Negroes learned more about themselves and their real contributions to this culture, you would be liberating not only Negroes, you'd be liberating white people who know nothing about their own history".[7]

The social conscience of our time demands that all people develop a sense of worth and social responsibility. If meaningful concepts about the many children who grow up in America, facing problems of city and rural living, and meeting people of various racial, religious and national backgrounds are to be developed, then these concepts must be drawn from a portrayal and discussion of the people, scenes and activities which are part and parcel of their daily living. Only by the child's identification with what he sees and reads can we hope to develop the positive self-image and personal motivation he needs for future success[8]. The times demand that these conditions be positively and effectively changed now!

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[7]James Baldwin, "A talk To Teachers", *Saturday Review*, Vol. XLVI, December 27, 1963, pp. 42-44.

[8]Hortense Jones, *Urban Social Studies Brochure*, Holt Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1966, p. 6.